

Tennessee Schools On Notice 2001-02



System Report: Knox County Schools

**John G. Morgan
Comptroller of the Treasury
Office of Education Accountability
September 2002**



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September 16, 2002

The Honorable John S. Wilder
Speaker of the Senate
The Honorable Jimmy Naifeh
Speaker of the House of Representatives
and
Members of the House and Senate Education Committees

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Tennessee Code Annotated 49-1-602 requires the Office of Education Accountability and the Tennessee Department of Education to conduct a joint study of schools and/or systems placed on notice of probation. In September 2001, the Department and the State Board of Education officially placed 98 schools in 11 systems on notice. This system report is one of 11 addressing the affected school systems.

OEA analysts reviewed aspects of each system, other than curriculum and instruction, which current research indicates may affect student achievement, including governance and management, funding and resources, parent and community involvement, and facility condition. Each report provides recommendations for improvement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John G. Morgan", is written over the typed name.

John G. Morgan
Comptroller of the Treasury

cc: Commissioner Faye Taylor
Department of Education

Tennessee Schools On Notice 2001-02



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The Office of Education Accountability was created in the Office of the Comptroller of the Treasury by *Tennessee Code Annotated* 4-3-308 to monitor the performance of school boards, superintendents, school districts, schools, and school personnel in accordance with the performance standards set out in the Education Improvement Act or by regulations of the State Board of Education. The office is to conduct such studies, analyses, or audits as it may determine necessary to evaluate education performance and progress, or as may be assigned to it by the Governor or General Assembly.

Comptroller of the Treasury, Office of Education Accountability,
Authorization Number 307296-08, 100 copies, September 2002. This public document was promulgated at a cost of \$2.14 per copy.

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KNOX COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM

Introduction

In 2001, the Tennessee Department of Education identified 98 schools in 11 systems needing to improve student academic performance. The State Board of Education approved the list in September, and the commissioner officially placed the schools on notice. Three schools in the Knox County school system are now on notice:

- Lonsdale Elementary School
- Maynard Elementary School
- Sarah Moore Greene Elementary School

Once schools are on notice, *Tennessee Code Annotated* 49-1-602 requires the Department of Education and the Comptroller's Office of Education Accountability to study jointly the schools and/or systems. The study must produce recommendations on how school systems can improve and meet state performance standards. This report is the Office of Education Accountability's portion of the Knox County school system study.

The Department of Education and the Office of Education Accountability (OEA) determined the two agencies would study schools and systems on notice separately. Each agency designed research protocol to examine areas within its expertise. The department concentrated on curriculum and instruction, and the OEA examined other areas potentially affecting student achievement. The OEA considered the following areas:

- general school, student, and staff information;
- governance and management;
- funding and resources;
- parent, community, and business involvement;
- facilities and climate; and
- class size.

The study addressed individual schools to the extent possible.

The Department of Education contracted with retired educators, referred to as Exemplary Educators, to provide technical assistance to the systems and schools on notice. OEA staff did not meet with Exemplary Educators (EEs) during the joint study because the Department of Education felt interviews with OEA could compromise EEs' relationships with systems and schools. Department of Education staff were also concerned about EEs' time constraints.

Background and Methodology

The 98 Tennessee schools placed on notice failed to meet achievement and growth criteria established by the Tennessee Department of Education under the authority granted in *Tennessee Code Annotated* 49-1-601 – 602, displayed in the following figures. The law states that schools placed on notice must improve student achievement by the end of the first year or be placed on probation. Schools on notice that achieve adequate yearly progress after one year will remain on notice but will be specified as

“improving.”¹ Schools unable to achieve adequate yearly progress can be on probation up to two years before facing sanctions such as reconstitution or alternative governance. The following figures display the criteria developed by the Department of Education to identify schools needing improvement.

K-8 criteria used to place schools on notice:

Achievement criteria

School-wide three-year achievement averages in reading, language arts, and mathematics less than 40 NCE (normal curve equivalent)

Schools on notice have a three-year achievement pattern of 48-73% of their student population in the below average group.

Growth factors (Adequate Yearly Progress)

1. School-wide cumulative three-year value added of 100 percent in reading, language arts, and mathematics
2. Closing the achievement gap by a reduction in the number/percentage of students in the below average group in reading, language arts, mathematics, and writing

Schools on notice failed to meet one or both of the growth factors.

(Source: Tennessee Department of Education, Office of Accountability)

9-12 criteria used to place schools on notice:

Achievement criteria

Achievement levels in Algebra I End of Course, 11th grade writing, and ACT composite

Schools identified as on notice had below average achievement in two or more of these areas.

Growth factors

1. Positive Value Added (meeting predicted targets)
2. Closing the achievement gap by a reduction in the number/percentage of students in below average group
3. Positive trend in reducing dropout rate

Schools on notice failed to meet one or more of the growth factors.

(Source: Tennessee Department of Education, Office of Accountability)

To complete its study, the OEA assigned teams of analysts to the 11 systems with schools on notice. The department provided names of district liaisons who acted as guides through each school system’s administrative structure. At a minimum, staff interviewed the following persons in each system:

- District liaisons designated by Directors of Schools
- Department of Education Regional Directors
- Principals of schools on notice

Other district staff members often participated in the interviews or were interviewed individually. OEA staff also:

- Conducted an extensive literature review of school improvement strategies and low performing schools issues.

¹ With the passage of the 2001 “No Child Left Behind” Act, Tennessee has merged its accountability system with federal law. According to the merged systems, schools must show improvement for two consecutive years to move off notice completely.

- Reviewed audits of systems with schools on notice.
- Participated in staff training focused on school visits.
- Observed training for Exemplary Educators conducted by the Department of Education and the Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Inc. (AEL) (contractor for Exemplary Educators program).
- Attended school board meetings in some systems with schools on notice.
- Requested and reviewed available documentation from each system.

The OEA's study resulted in 11 system reports. Each system report includes background information, strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations.

See Appendix A for a list of persons interviewed and documents reviewed regarding Knox County Schools. See Appendix B for the current status of schools on notice. See Appendix C for the system's response to the report.

Common Characteristics of On-notice Schools and State-level Concerns

Common characteristics of low-performing schools

Research indicates that schools with low achievement are disproportionately likely to:

- have a large number of students from low income and minority backgrounds
- be located in communities with significant concentrations of poverty and its associated problems
- have low standards and expectations for their students
- have a weak curriculum
- have limited parental involvement
- employ less experienced and less well-qualified teachers and other instructional staff
- have high staff turnover rates
- have lower morale than in other schools
- have a school environment that lacks order and discipline²

SREB notes that separate studies of school performance in North Carolina and Texas found common characteristics among low-performing schools similar to those listed above: weak leadership, inexperienced teachers, high turnover in faculty, and a lack of focus on state content standards.³

Common characteristics of Tennessee's on-notice schools

OEA staff found that no single system with schools on notice could be characterized by every factor listed above. However, at least some of the factors are true of most of the systems and schools. Several have large numbers of students from low income and

² U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Under Secretary and Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, January 2001, *School Improvement Report: Executive Order on Actions for Turning Around Low-Performing Schools*, Washington, D.C., p. 4.

³ Jim Watts, *Getting Results with Accountability: Rating Schools, Assisting Schools, Improving Schools*, Southern Regional Education Board, p. 18.

minority backgrounds and have large concentrations of poverty in their communities. Most have limited parental involvement, many have high staff turnover rates, and some employ a large number of teachers that are less experienced and less qualified (as shown by the number of teachers with waivers and permits).

In addition, analysts noted two other conditions present among many of Tennessee's on-notice schools: high student mobility and a sense of isolation, even in urban settings. High mobility is shown to lower achievement for individual students, but may also have a general effect of lowering school- and district-wide performance.⁴

Some of the rural on-notice schools are located in extremely geographically isolated areas, with few opportunities for students to experience the outside world. Principals at several urban on-notice schools noted that large numbers of their students had limited experiences with opportunities that, in many cases, are geographically near them. Some principals indicated that many Memphis City students had never been in downtown Memphis before, for example, or visited the Memphis Zoo.

State-level findings in Tennessee's systems with schools on notice

An overall analysis of the findings from each of Tennessee's 11 systems with schools on notice during the 2001-02 school year revealed some common issues, which can be grouped into seven major areas:

- student readiness;
- teacher shortages;
- technology;
- school accreditation;
- data challenges;
- funding; and
- placing schools on notice and providing technical assistance.

A separate state-level report provides detailed findings and recommendations regarding these issues. In the 11 system reports, this symbol ★ denotes an area for which a corresponding conclusion and recommendation appear in the state-level report. The state-level report may be accessed at www.comptroller.state.tn.us/orea/reports or a printed copy may be requested from the Office of Education Accountability at (615)401-7911.

⁴ David Kerbow, Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk, "Patterns of Urban Student Mobility and Local School Reform," October 1996, <http://www.csos.jhu.edu/cresp/Reports/report05entire.html> (accessed March 14, 2002).

Knox County School System Background Characteristics

SCHOOLS AND STAFF 2000-01	
Number of schools	88
Number of schools on notice	3
Number of teachers	3,380
Number of teacher waivers	9
Number of teacher permits	2
Average teacher salary	\$37,547

(Source: Knox County Report Card 2001)

FUNDING 2000-01	
Total expenditures	\$306,984,522
Per-pupil expenditures	\$5,836
Federal revenue	6.7%
State revenue	37.7%
<i>includes BEP state share</i>	<i>\$103,632,000</i>
Local revenue	55.7%
<i>includes BEP local share</i>	<i>\$86,661,000</i>

(Source: Basic Education Program Spreadsheet 2000-01; Tennessee Department of Education Annual Report 2001, Knox County Report Card 2001)

Knox County's per pupil expenditure of \$5,836 is less than the statewide average of \$6,055 and national average of \$7,436. The average teacher salary in Knox County is \$37,547 compared to a statewide average of \$37,431 in the 2000-01 school year. Knox County relies less heavily on state funding than many other systems throughout the state, whose average state contribution is 47 percent.⁵

Knox County Schools receives several federal and state grants. The system's three schools on notice received federal Comprehensive School Reform grants of \$100,000 in July 2002.⁶ Additionally, the system and individual schools receive some private contributions.⁷ Each public school in Knox County has at least one business partner. Business partners provide specific services, donations, or in-kind resources. Some schools also participate with higher education institutions to provide internships or volunteer opportunities.

STUDENT POPULATION 2000-01	
Number of students	52,072
African American	13.6%
Caucasian	83.5%
Other	3%

⁵ Tennessee Department of Education, "Statewide Report Card 2001," <http://www.k-12.state.tn.us/rptcrd01/state1.htm> (accessed February 15, 2002).

⁶ "21 Schools Receive Federal School Reform Grant," Tennessee Department of Education News Release, July 11, 2002.

⁷ Knox County Schools Budget, Fiscal Year 2000-2001.

English language learners	1.2%
Special education	20.1%
Free and reduced lunch	31.9%

(Source: Knox County Report Card 2001)

Additional System Information

Knox County Schools and Knoxville City Schools consolidated into one county system in 1987 to form the state's third largest school system. The system is one of the largest enterprises in the Knox County MSA.⁸ The system recently showed an improvement in all grade levels in the 2001-02 state writing assessment, though Director of Schools Dr. Charles Lindsey acknowledges a need "to move...stationary and lower performing schools to higher levels of competency."⁹

Dr. Lindsey held public forums through the 2001-02 school year to discuss the "World Class School System" template, a plan that will alter several areas of school and system operations if adopted and funded. Changes include starting year round schooling, providing teacher incentives, increasing community involvement, and implementing accountability measures. A task force of business leaders and educators developed the plan and presented it to the Knox County Board of Education in October 2001. Implementing it would require approximately \$45 million in annual expenditures.¹⁰

Knox County provides alternatives for students to attend public schools outside their regular school zone. Regardless of assigned zone, students can apply to attend one of the system's five magnet programs. The system conducts informational meetings at the schools during the application period each year. Each magnet program focuses on a specific theme, such as performing arts and science. One school on notice, Sarah Moore Greene Elementary, has a magnet technology component. Knox County also allows parents to apply to transfer their children outside their assigned school zone. There are also 27 active private schools in Knox County.¹¹

Knox County operates one Family Resource Center (FRC).¹² The center employs a director to oversee daily operations. The system's FRC collaborates with various community agencies to provide literacy for families, preschool-in-a-bag, nutrition programs, tutoring/mentoring, clothing/housing/food, case management, Good News

⁸ Knoxville Area Chamber Partnership, "Economic Development/Existing Industry," http://www.knoxvillechamber.com/economic_development/existing_industry.html (accessed June 18, 2002).

⁹ KCS News Release, "KCS Sees Marked Increase in Writing Scores," Release #02-086, Knox County Schools, June 28, 2002, <http://www.kornet.org/kcschool/news/02/releases/02-086.htm> (accessed July 9, 2002).

¹⁰ Dr. Charles Lindsey, Director of Schools, "Superintendent's Newsletter," Volume 3, Issue 4, Knox County Schools, November 2, 2001, <http://www.kornet.org/kcschool/supernewsletter/III/4/newsletter.html> (accessed May 15, 2002).

¹¹ "List of Active Schools," Knox County Private Schools, SDE Directory, <http://www.k-12.state.tn.us/SDE/default.asp>, (accessed May 20, 2002).

¹² The General Assembly created a grant program in 1992 to allow local education agencies to establish FRCs to coordinate state and community services to help meet the needs of families with children (T.C.A. 49-2-115).

Reports, and a parent lending library. The Knox County FRC, opened in 1994, serves four schools, one of which is on notice.¹³

Schools on Notice Background Characteristics

LONSDALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 2000-01	
Grades served	K-5
Number of students	278
African American	64.7%
Caucasian	33.8%
Other	1.5%
English language learners*	0
Special education**	22.6%
Free and reduced lunch	87.8%
Number of teachers employed	28
Number of administrators	1

*(Source: Lonsdale Elementary School Report Card 2001; TN Department of Education School Approval Database; *Principal interview; **Special education figures on school report cards represent the percentage of students taking the TCAP that were identified as special education students and does not represent students in grades K-2 or 9-12.)*

Lonsdale Elementary does not have a pre-kindergarten program. The school has a student mobility rate of 40 percent.¹⁴ After completing the 5th grade, Lonsdale students attend Northwest Middle School. Principal Carolyn Lee has been at Lonsdale for three years.

Lonsdale Elementary School was constructed in 1935 with an addition to the building in 1955. Several improvements have been made since the mid-1990s including new flooring in the halls and classrooms, lowered ceilings and new light fixtures in some areas, and central heating and air-conditioning in the addition to the school. The school has one portable classroom that houses music and TAG (Talented and Gifted) classes. The recent TACIR School Facility Survey rates the school building condition “fair” overall.¹⁵ Volunteers from TVA and Ameristeel landscaped the exterior grounds of the school in 2001.¹⁶

In addition to its share of system-level grants, the school received approximately \$7,500 in donations in 2001 from private entities. Further, the school’s Title I grant supports three Reading Recovery teachers, a curriculum coordinator, and seven teaching assistants.

¹³ Family Resource Center survey conducted by Office of Education Accountability, Comptroller of the Treasury, Summer 2001.

¹⁴ “School Context Assessment, 2000-2001 Report,” Office of Research and Evaluation, Knox County Schools.

¹⁵ Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, Existing School Facility Survey Form and Verification Data, 2002, Lonsdale Elementary School.

¹⁶ Lonsdale Elementary School Improvement Plan 2001.

MAYNARD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 2000-01	
Grades served	K-5
Number of students	100
African American	82.6%
Caucasian	17.4%
Other	0
English language learners*	0
Special education	25.9%
Free and reduced lunch	99.8%
Number of teachers employed	16
Number of administrators	1

*(Source: Maynard Elementary School Report Card 2001; TN Department of Education School Approval Database; *Principal interview; **Special education figures on school report cards represent the percentage of students taking the TCAP that were identified as special education students and does not represent students in grades K-2 or 9-12.)*

Maynard Elementary houses a small pre-kindergarten program that serves both special and regular education children. The school's student mobility rate is 43 percent.¹⁷ Students leaving Maynard continue their education at Bearden Middle School. Principal Melvenia Smith is completing her third year as principal of Maynard Elementary.

Maynard opened in 1897. The current main facility was completed in 1926, with an addition in 1956. The recent TACIR School Facility Survey rates the school building condition "poor" overall and designates each classroom the same.¹⁸

Maynard serves a community in transition – the 1998 destruction of College Homes, a 320 unit housing project covering 15 acres, led to a decrease in the student population (though officials note the school has always been small). Knoxville Community Development Corporation's Hope VI Project is building single family and duplex homes on the site.

System officials note that Maynard has been one of the lowest performing schools in Knoxville for over 100 years. Maynard's historical low performance and discussions about the school closing or being privatized prompted the central office to develop "The Maynard Plan" in 1997-98. The five-year plan provided the school with additional technology and staff. According to a system official, the plan is rendered obsolete by Maynard's new status as a national demonstration site for Project GRAD (see Strengths section).¹⁹

¹⁷ "School Context Assessment, 2000-2001 Report," Office of Research and Evaluation, Knox County Schools.

¹⁸ Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, Existing School Facility Survey Form and Verification Data, 2002, Maynard Elementary School.

¹⁹ Telephone interview with Bobbi McGarity, Assistant Superintendent for Supplementary Student Services, Knox County Schools, April 23, 2002.

Maynard receives Title I funds for schoolwide improvement. In addition to its share of system-level grants, the school receives some private grants. In school year 2000-01, the school received a \$2,500 grant from CVS Pharmacy to purchase student t-shirts and materials for two academic programs. The University of Tennessee Medical Center has adopted Maynard Elementary. The school also receives support from local businesses: Gam's Barber Shop, Knox Area Transit, and Southern Building Service.

SARAH MOORE GREENE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 2000-01	
Grades served	K-5
Number of students	700
African American	82.5%
Caucasian	16.2%
Other	1.2%
English language learners*	<1%
Special education	12.4%
Free and reduced lunch	87%
Number of teachers employed	62
Number of administrators	2

*(Source: Sarah Moore Greene Elementary School Report Card 2001; TN Department of Education School Approval Database; *Principal interview; **Special education figures on school report cards represent the percentage of students taking the TCAP that were identified as special education students and does not represent students in grades K-2 or 9-12.)*

Sarah Moore Greene does not have a pre-kindergarten program. The school has a student mobility rate of 29 percent.²⁰ After completing the fifth grade, Sarah Moore Greene students attend Vine Magnet Middle School, Holston Middle School, Carter Middle School, or South-Doyle Middle School. Principal Blenza Davis has been at Sarah Moore Greene for 16 years.

The school opened in 1973 and was renovated and became a Magnet Technology Academy in 1996 to increase diversity.²¹ Entrance into the school's magnet program is based on interest rather than test scores. Adequate space is an issue for the school, which has two portables and uses closet space to hold several classes and offices. The recent TACIR School Facility Survey rates the school building condition "good" overall.²²

In addition to its share of system-level grants, the school received donations and volunteer support in 2001. Further, Sarah Moore Greene received the following school-level grants: Goals 2000, the Goldenrod Technology Integration Grant, Education Edge,

²⁰ "School Context Assessment, 2000-2001 Report," Office of Research and Evaluation, Knox County Schools.

²¹ Sarah Moore Greene Elementary School Improvement Plan 2001.

²² Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, Existing School Facility Survey Form and Verification Data, 2002, Sarah Moore Greene Elementary School.

Project Impact, and a Technology Literacy Grant. The school's Title I funds support reading initiatives and technology. The school also receives assistance from Apple Computer, Inc. and Knoxville Area Transit, which provide the school with technological and financial support.²³

Additionally, Sarah Moore Greene Elementary is a Professional Development School (PDS) of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. As a PDS, Sarah Moore Greene receives interns, resources, and professional development.

²³ Ibid.

Analysis and Conclusions

Note that the symbol ★ denotes an area for which a corresponding conclusion and recommendation appear in the state-level report.

Strengths

The Knox County school system effectively plans and implements resulting plans.

Knox County evaluates and revises its district level improvement plan (the System Strategic Plan) annually, exceeding State Board of Education Rule 0520-1-3-.03(16)(a) requirements. The policy states:

- (a) Each local board of education shall develop, maintain, and implement a long-range strategic plan which addresses at least a five-year period of time. The plan shall be updated every two years and include a mission statement, goals, objectives and strategies, and address the State Board of Education master plan.

The district plan is data driven and developed by a task force of stakeholders. It enumerates specific goals, objectives, and strategies. The superintendent has a 12-month agenda that focuses on strategic goals and objectives and the needs of the community. The agenda serves as a tool to monitor implementation initiatives. Additionally, each principal has a building-level 12-month agenda that is closely aligned with the system-level plan, the superintendent's agenda, and school improvement plans (SIP).²⁴

The Knox County school system monitors the development and implementation of school improvement plans. Further, the system requires schools to incorporate district-level planning documents into individual SIPs. In addition to requiring district level planning, the State Board of Education requires each system to have schools in its jurisdiction “develop, maintain, and implement a school improvement plan” to be updated every two years.²⁵ Each of the Knox County schools visited has developed a SIP in compliance with this rule and updated its SIP at least every two years.

The system trains principals and teachers to interpret test data (such as value-added scores) and ways to improve targeted areas of need. These areas are specified in planning documents, particularly SIPs, and incorporated into goals and objectives. Additionally, the district provides training for school staff on how to write improvement plans. Teams of stakeholders develop and implement the SIPs.²⁶

Concerning the implementation of the SIP, system officials stated that central office staff monitors implementation to ensure that the SIP is consistent with system-level planning documents and the superintendent and principal's 12-month agendas. Principals also indicated that the SIPs are “working documents” they use frequently.

The Knox County school system and schools on notice are effectively using test data to plan for improvement. Analysis of standardized test data is a growing method of

²⁴ Knox County School System Strategic Plan IV, Fall 2001.

²⁵ Tennessee State Board of Education Rule 0520-1-3-.03(16)(b).

²⁶ Interview of Sarah Simpson, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Knox County Schools, January 8, 2002.

school improvement planning. Tennessee mandates testing of students in grades 3 through 8 and emphasizes the use of TCAP and TVAAS scores to diagnose priority areas. The State Board of Education 2002 Master Plan includes the goal of using assessment “to improve student learning and demonstrate accountability.”²⁷ The plan also lists the strategy of assisting low-performing “schools in using assessment data to identify strengths and weaknesses.”²⁸ The Department of Education used test data to place schools on notice.

In Knox County, the system’s Office of Research and Evaluation assists schools annually by providing printed information, workshops, and individualized data interpretation. Each year, the office publishes a booklet of standardized test results; in 2000-01, the booklet contained group scores “reported in 49 tables arranged by the type of test being reported.”²⁹ The office also conducts annual “Value-Added Workshops” for principals and several teachers in all Knox County Schools to “go through the test data so that schools can identify their strengths and weaknesses.”³⁰ Staff hold follow-up meetings and provide other assistance as requested; the office has also met with the system’s lowest performing schools to discuss data trends.³¹

Principals at each school on notice display an understanding of test data and on notice criteria and have facilitated school-level understanding by classroom teachers. Each referenced the data interpretation assistance provided by the central office. Further, the “Student Performance Data Analysis” section of each school improvement plan for schools on notice includes in-depth analysis used for short- and long-range planning. Goals for student achievement in the plans include attainment of higher scores and individual performance areas and sub-skills. Central office personnel indicate that some schools use data analysis from workshops in school improvement plans.³²

Each school on notice in Knox County has begun implementing components of the Project GRAD program, a national design for urban school improvement. The Knox County School Board approved Project GRAD (Graduation Really Achieves Dreams) on August 1, 2001, to be implemented in the system’s 14 inner city schools in the Heart of Knoxville Empowerment Zone. The elementary, middle, and high schools (including the three on-notice schools) will implement the program’s five components: Consistency Management and Cooperative Discipline, Communities in Schools, Success for All, Move It Math, and scholarships for graduates. The program will provide each participating school with additional staff, professional development opportunities, and expanded curricula.

²⁷ Tennessee State Board of Education, Key Result Area 6: Accountability and Assessment, *Master Plan 2002*, p. 10.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

²⁹ Office of Research and Evaluation, *2000-2001 Test Results*, Knox County Schools, 2001.

³⁰ Mike Winstead, Research and Evaluation Coordinator, Knox County Schools, “Re: Comptroller’s Study of On Notice Schools,” E-mail to the author, Apr. 16, 2002.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

Teachers and principals at each school on notice have been trained in and are using Cooperative Discipline and Consistency Management, a research-based classroom management tool each principal feels will enhance classroom time and instruction. Recent research links the classroom management component with decreased teacher turnover and other improvements.³³ Maynard Elementary was recently named a national demonstration site for Project GRAD and will implement all five components in a little over a year (the program usually takes five years to implement). All staff at Maynard Elementary must reapply for positions for the 2002-03 school year and take part in intense summer training if rehired. Principals and central office staff at each school on notice express high expectations for the program.

In Knoxville, the program “is being funded as a public/private partnership” with Project GRAD Knoxville, Inc., a nonprofit corporation raising start-up costs.³⁴ One principal noted her faith in the survivability of the program because of private funding and 12-year partnership between the school board and corporation. The private corporation “will raise and provide greater than 75 [percent] of the start-up costs of the initiative,” which for the first six years totals more than \$9 million.³⁵

Knox County has a strict attendance policy and truancy program, but system attendance rates have worsened slightly over the last two years. The rates are still, however, better than the statewide average. The system developed and implemented a new attendance/truancy policy for the 1999-2000 school year called the Parental Responsibility Program. Specifically, the policy limits the number of unexcused absences a student can have to 10 (the previous limit was 15 or more). After five unexcused absences, the superintendent sends a letter to the student’s parents. After 10 absences, the District Attorney General sends a letter to parents requesting a meeting. At the meeting, the district attorney explains to the parents that he/she has the option of filing charges if the student’s attendance does not improve.³⁶ The superintendent or assistant superintendent, a court representative, and a representative from the University of Tennessee also attend the meeting to explain the importance of education to parents. If attendance does not improve, a Truancy Review Board assesses the situation and, if necessary, recommends that charges be filed against the parents. Police involvement is limited to transporting truant students to the county’s Truancy Center where parents are contacted.³⁷

³³ University of Houston News Release, “Inner-City Teacher Turnover Rate Reduced Through UH Program,” Office of External Communications, January 23, 2001, <http://www.uh.edu/admin/media/nr/12001/cmcd.htm> (accessed April 16, 2002).

³⁴ KCS News Release, “Maynard Elementary Becomes Demonstration Site,” Release #02-038, Knox County Schools, March 15, 2002, <http://www.kornet.org/kcschool/news/02/releases/02-038.htm> (accessed May 15, 2002).

³⁵ Fact Sheet: Project GRAD Knoxville and Project GRAD Preliminary Expenditure Estimates, dated June 25, 2001, received from Sarah Simpson, January 8, 2002.

³⁶ Telephone interview, Bobbi McGarity, Assistant Superintendent for Supplementary Student Services, Knox County Schools, April 23, 2002.

³⁷ Telephone interview, Rhonda Gerrin, Community Prosecution Coordinator, Knox County District Attorney General, June 19, 2002.

After implementation of the policy, the system's attendance rate decreased from 94.96 percent³⁸ during the 1999-2000 school year to 94.46 percent³⁹ in the 2000-01 school year. However, the system's attendance rate exceeded the statewide level of attendance in 1999-2000 (which was 94.06 percent)⁴⁰ and in 2000-01 (which was also 94.06 percent).⁴¹

Knox County Schools provides a well-planned professional development system for central office staff, principals, teachers, and teaching assistants. Quality professional growth for educators is crucial to increasing student achievement. A recent longitudinal study of Title I schools found that students improved in reading and mathematics when "teachers gave high ratings to their professional development" in both subjects.⁴² The Knox County school system claims the "primary responsibility for professional development" and recently received commendation for its staff development program in a 2001 performance audit by an independent firm.⁴³

The system implements staff development through a Staff Development Planning Framework and a Delivery System. The framework clarifies system and school responsibilities for staff development provided through the structure in the delivery system. Knox County Schools offers workshops, seminars, and graduate credit courses at its Teacher Center. The center, opened in 1979 and funded by the system and Title VI, is open to certified and non-certified employees. The center houses a library and provides materials and equipment for lesson plan development. System officials note the center has been validated as "educationally effective" by the Tennessee Department of Education and report 10,740 visits to the center in school year 2000-01.⁴⁴

Interviews with principals of schools on notice in Knox County reveal that educators at each school are engaged in ongoing development. The principals complete professional growth plans when evaluating teachers, and one specifically mentioned the use of the teacher center in such plans. School improvement plans from each school on notice incorporate staff development needs and plans. The system's World Class School System

³⁸ Tennessee Department of Education, "Knox County School System Report Card 2000," <http://www.k-12.state.tn.us/rptcrd00/system.asp> (accessed February 14, 2002).

³⁹ Tennessee Department of Education, "Knox County School System Report Card 2001," <http://www.k-12.state.tn.us/rptcrd01/system.asp> (accessed February 14, 2002).

⁴⁰ Tennessee Department of Education, "Statewide Report Card 2000," <http://www.k-12.state.tn.us/rptcrd00/index.asp> (accessed February 4, 2002).

⁴¹ Tennessee Department of Education, "Statewide Report Card 2001," <http://www.k-12.state.tn.us/rptcrd01/index.asp> (accessed February 4, 2002).

⁴² Planning and Evaluation Service, *The Longitudinal Evaluation of School Change and Performance in Title I Schools Final Report*, "Volume 1: Executive Summary," U.S. Department of Education Office of the Deputy Secretary, 2001, pp. 1-2. <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OUS/PED/esec/lescp-vol1.pdf> (accessed May 2, 2002).

⁴³ McConnell, Jones, Lanier & Murphy LLP, "Executive Summary," *Knox County Schools Management and Performance Review*, March 2001, pp. ES-2, <http://instech.knox.k12tn.net/news/MJLM/mgtreview.html> (accessed May 3, 2002).

⁴⁴ Telephone interview with Marti Richardson, Teacher Center, Staff Development, and Extended Learning Program Supervisor, Knox County Schools, April 15, 2002.

plan also includes a staff development component that outlines strategies for improving system-wide staff development.⁴⁵

In 2001-02, Knox County Schools achieved the EIA requirements for class size maximums and averages.⁴⁶ In 2000-01, the year schools were placed on notice, some classes and schools in Knox County did not meet state-mandated grade level averages and class size maximums, though each school on notice was in compliance that year.⁴⁷ The system had nine 7-12 classes and six vocational classes exceed maximums. Three schools exceeded the K-3 average, five exceeded the 4-6 average, and four exceeded the vocational average. However, systems were not required to meet the EIA class size requirements until the 2001-02 school year. (TCA 49-1-104 requires that by the 2001-02 school year, no class shall exceed the prescribed maximum size and no school would be allowed to exceed the required average class size for its grade level.)

The Knox County school system developed Personal Accountability Classes (PACs) approximately three years ago for all elementary schools. These classes serve as an alternative to out-of-school suspension; however, it is unclear if these classes have affected student suspension rates (see Areas for Improvement). PACs provide a time and place for disruptive students to settle themselves and regain focus under the supervision of an adult. Knox County's PAC program was developed approximately three years ago in an attempt to curb the number of elementary suspensions. These classes are staffed by teacher's assistants who help students with regular class work. Additionally, students learn character education, social skills and conflict resolution while in PAC classes. Teachers send disruptive students to the principal's office. The principal then refers the student to the PAC class. The length of time the student is assigned to the PAC class varies but is no longer than three days at a time.

In the event that no students are in PAC class, PAC instructors visit classrooms throughout the school and teach character education and/or social skills. The PAC program was initially funded through a grant, but the system continued funding when the grant expired.⁴⁸

Based on 1999-2000 and 2000-01 report card data, two of the three schools on notice in Knox County had increased numbers of suspensions from one year to the next. At Lonsdale Elementary, there were 32 suspensions during the 1999-2000 school year⁴⁹ and 45 during 2000-01⁵⁰. Maynard Elementary had four suspensions during the 1999-2000

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Tennessee Department of Education, School Approval, Class size spreadsheet, 2001-02.

⁴⁷ Tennessee Department of Education, School Approval, Class size and teacher information spreadsheet, 2000-01.

⁴⁸ Telephone interview, Nancy Merritt, Coordinator, Personal Accountability Classes, Knox County Schools, April 15, 2002.

⁴⁹ Tennessee Department of Education, "Lonsdale Elementary School Report Card 2000," <http://www.k-12.state.tn.us/rptcrd00/school.asp> (accessed June 19, 2002).

⁵⁰ Tennessee Department of Education, "Lonsdale Elementary School Report Card 2001," <http://www.k-12.state.tn.us/rptcrd01/school1.asp> (accessed June 19, 2002).

school year⁵¹ and 18 suspensions during the 2000-01 school year⁵². Finally, Sarah Moore Greene Elementary School had 43 suspensions in 1999-2000⁵³ and 32 in 2000-01.⁵⁴ It should be noted that enrollment also increased in each of the schools.

Knox County Schools provides central office staff to help principals make school-level improvements. School systems can improve schools by redeploying central office staff to “support, rather than direct, schools.”⁵⁵ School-level support can allow principals more time for instructional leadership and internal capacity-building. In Knox County, the system provides full time curriculum generalists for Title I schools and uses elementary supervisors to assist principals with teacher evaluations, staff development, implementation of initiatives, and school-level planning.

Curriculum generalists are central office employees assigned to schools; described by one system official as a direct arm of the instruction department, generalists assist classroom teachers in implementing the elementary curriculum.⁵⁶ Each school on notice in the system has a full time curriculum generalist. Generalists provide guidance in all subject areas by observing teachers and offering strategies for improvement. Principals of schools on notice noted various other functions performed by curriculum generalists:

- assisting with teacher assignments,
- conducting teacher training by subject area;
- mentoring new teachers;
- attending system-level training; and
- interpreting and providing assistance on test data.

Additionally, the curriculum generalist at each school on notice serves on the school improvement planning team.

Elementary supervisors assist with teacher evaluations by providing secondary observations for non-tenured teachers and additional formal and informal classroom observations. Though supervisors do not spend significant amounts of time in any one school (there are 51 schools divided among four supervisors), they view themselves as “on call” to assist with school-identified curricular needs. Supervisors handle parent complaints for their schools at the central office and act as liaisons between schools and the superintendent. Supervisors develop elementary initiatives and provide training for the programs; the supervisors used Class Size Reduction money to produce CARE,

⁵¹ Tennessee Department of Education, “Maynard Elementary School Report Card 2000,” <http://www.k-12.state.tn.us/rptcrd00/school.asp> (accessed June 19, 2002).

⁵² Tennessee Department of Education, “Maynard Elementary School Report Card 2001,” <http://www.k-12.state.tn.us/rptcrd00/school.asp> (accessed June 19, 2002).

⁵³ Tennessee Department of Education, “Sarah Moore Greene Elementary School Report Card 2000,” <http://www.k-12.state.tn.us/rptcrd00/school.asp> (accessed June 19, 2002).

⁵⁴ Tennessee Department of Education, “Sarah Moore Greene Elementary School Report Card 2001,” <http://www.k-12.state.tn.us/rptcrd00/school.asp> (accessed June 19, 2002).

⁵⁵ “Building School Capacity: Systemic Support for the Process of Change,” *Turning Around Low-Performing Schools: A Guide for State and Local Leaders*, U.S. Department of Education, May 1998, <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/turning/capacity.html> (accessed May 8, 2002).

⁵⁶ Telephone interview with Sarah Simpson, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Knox County Schools, April 11, 2002.

SMART, and Kindergarten Literacy. Supervisors also assist with planning and test data analysis for prioritizing needs.

Principals at schools on notice mentioned regular contact with elementary supervisors; the level of contact is based on school needs. One principal has had additional contact with the supervisor since the school was placed on notice, noting the supervisor has provided motivation, ideas for school improvement, and in-service training. System officials note that curriculum generalists, elementary supervisors, and other central office staff meet to discuss school-level progress.

★ **All schools on notice in Knox County have building-level technology plans and ample technological resources available for students.** Knox County Schools require each school to develop and maintain a building-level technology plan that includes the school's goals, plans of action, evaluation, funding, and recommendations concerning technology.⁵⁷

Regarding the availability of technology at the on-notice schools, Lonsdale Elementary has 70 computers (four students per computer), Maynard Elementary has 71 computers (1.4 students per computer), and Sarah Moore Greene Elementary has approximately 300 computers (2.3 students per computer).⁵⁸ Computer usage varies, but each school has computers that are connected to the Internet dispersed in regular education and special education classrooms. Some of the schools have computer labs and computers in the library for research. Most computers are late models. As previously mentioned, Sarah Moore Greene is a magnet technology school and has greater availability of computer usage.

In 1999-2000, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) developed a technology model for a well-equipped school.⁵⁹ Specifically, they recommended that schools should have a minimum student-computer ratio of 5:1, late model computers, and a high level of Internet connectivity.⁶⁰ Lonsdale (4:1), Maynard (1.4:1), and Sarah Moore Greene (2.3:1) have student-computer ratios better than both the SREB recommendation⁶¹ and Tennessee's average student-computer ratio of 5.4 students for every computer.⁶² Additionally, most of the equipment is modern and the majority of the computers are connected to the Internet. To develop their technological resources, Knox County system staff applied for and received several grants, which were divided among schools in the system. Schools were also allowed to apply individually for technology grants.⁶³

⁵⁷ Telephone interview, Pat Dickens, Technology Grant Assistant, Knox County Schools, April 15, 2002.

⁵⁸ Principals provided the number of computers at each school.

⁵⁹ Lou Parker and William R. Thomas, "Guidelines for Technology Equipment Selection and Use: An SREB Model for Schools and Campuses," *Southern Regional Education Board*, June 1999, <http://www.sreb.org/programs/EdTech/pubs/techselectguidelines/EdTechGuidelines.pdf> (accessed March 11, 2002).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁶¹ Principals provided the number of computers at each school.

⁶² "Technology Counts, 2001," *Education Week*, May 10, 2001, pp. 70-105.

⁶³ Telephone interview, Pat Dickens, Technology Grant Assistant, Knox County Schools, April 15, 2002.

Areas for Improvement

The Knox County Commission and School Board have a strained relationship and differing views about governance and funding. Common goals between the funding body and the school system can ensure student needs are met and contribute to increased achievement; however, system and county officials and a recent performance review highlight the poor working relationship between the entities. Before an independent firm began reviewing the school system in 2000, the board and commission sparred about which firm to hire, who would pay the firm, and the scope of the review.⁶⁴ Released in March 2001, the report's first key recommendation is that both parties engage in "team building" exercises to produce the school budget.⁶⁵

Past litigation has caused tension between the county commission and the school board, particularly relating to budgetary and financial needs. In October 2001, the board filed suit against the county commission, the county executive, the law director's office, and the trustee, seeking greater financial autonomy from the county. The county commission countersued asking for increased control over the board.⁶⁶ A Knox County Chancellor upheld the county's home-rule charter in a February decision declaring the school board subject to terms and conditions thereof;⁶⁷ however, a subsequent March decision limits the commission's power to reject board contracts.⁶⁸

★ **None of the three schools on notice in Knox County is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).** The state-mandated school improvement planning process in which the schools participate is similar to the SACS accreditation planning process. As reported on the 2001 Tennessee Statewide Report Card, 1,110 out of 1,623, or approximately 68 percent of Tennessee schools, are accredited.⁶⁹ As of January 2002, 13 of the system's schools (12 high schools and one middle school) were accredited.⁷⁰ In May 2002, SACS awarded accreditation to all the system's middle schools. Dr. Charles Lindsey stated that the system will now "move toward accrediting all of our elementary schools over the next two years."⁷¹

⁶⁴ Jesse Fox Mayshark, "Audit Accomplished: Now What?," *Metro Pulse Online*, April 5, 2001, <http://www.metropulse.com> (accessed February 6, 2002).

⁶⁵ McConnell, Jones, Lanier & Murphy LLP, *Knox County Schools Management and Performance Review*, "Executive Summary," March 2001, pp. ES -3, <http://instech.knox.k12tn.net/news/MJLM/mgtreview.html> (accessed May 3, 2002).

⁶⁶ Michael Silence, "Ruling Issued in School Board-Commission Dispute," *KnoxNews Sentinel Online*, February 6, 2002, <http://www.knoxnews.com> (accessed February 6, 2002).

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Joe Sullivan, "The Disputatious School Board," *Metro Pulse*, Vol. 12, No. 13, March 28, 2002, http://www.metropulse.com/dir_zine/dir_2002/1213/t_insights.html (accessed May 20, 2002).

⁶⁹ Tennessee Department of Education, "Statewide Report Card 2001," <http://www.k-12.state.tn.us/rptcrd01/state1.htm> (accessed February 14, 2002).

⁷⁰ Interview with Sarah Simpson, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Knox County Schools, January 8, 2002.

⁷¹ KCS News Release, "All Middle Schools Receive Accreditation," Release #02-077, Knox County Schools, May 29, 2002, <http://www.korrnet.org/kcschool/news/02/releases/02-077.htm> (accessed July 17, 2002).

SACS accreditation ensures that schools meet a minimum set of standards, though it does not ensure any particular level of student achievement. According to SACS, the accreditation process “provides a school with the tools to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment, analyze data associated with student performance, assess the instructional and organizational effectiveness of a school, establish specific goals for student learning, and create meaningful action plans focused on improving student performance.”⁷² In addition, department staff notes that SACS provides an outside team to assist with school-level planning and make recommendations for improvement.⁷³

The Knox County School System did not receive \$6,927,000 for which it had budgeted because of an overestimation of special education students. Software provided by the Tennessee Department of Education and used to track special education students overestimated the number of students by 1,599 for the 2001-02 school year.⁷⁴ As a result, Knox County Schools was unable to allocate general per-pupil funds to schools.⁷⁵

In the past, each school received a per-pupil dollar amount (or general allocation). For example, in the 2000-01 school year, each school received approximately \$10.00 for every student (\$5.50 was used for instructional required courses and \$4.50 was used for the general operation of the school). According to central office staff, schools could spend these funds on items that student funds do not cover.⁷⁶ To compensate for the reductions, the Knox County School Board approved several budget adjustments including restricting staff, administrator, and teacher travel; restricting field trips; restricting professional leave; canceling cellular phones; eliminating all system-wide celebrations; postponing the purchase of some textbooks; reducing overtime; reducing utility costs; reducing transportation services; freezing hiring; and freezing furniture and equipment purchases in addition to withholding the general allocation.⁷⁷

Officials from Knox County schools reported the software problem to the Tennessee Department of Education and the software developers. Central office staff also stated that the system intends to provide each school with a general allocation next year; however the amount will be smaller than in the past (\$5.00 per student instead of \$10.00 per student).⁷⁸

⁷² Southern Association of Colleges and Schools web site, <http://www.sacs.org/pub/elem/csip/qsip/page3.html> (accessed May 29, 2002).

⁷³ Telephone interview with Connie Smith, Director of Accountability, Tennessee Department of Education, February 26, 2002.

⁷⁴ According to Knox County Schools, this number may be based on preliminary reports and not reflective of final adjustments.

⁷⁵ Letter from Commissioner Faye Taylor, Tennessee Department of Education, to Dr. Charles Lindsey, Director, Knox County Schools, December 10, 2001; Copy of letter obtained from Ron McPherson, Supervisor of Accounting Systems and Financial Control, Knox County Schools, April 22, 2002.

⁷⁶ Telephone interview with Roger Underwood, Accounts Payable Supervisor, Knox County Schools, May 14, 2002.

⁷⁷ List of budget adjustments sent to schools from Knox County central office, Fiscal Year 2002; provided by Blenza Davis, Principal, Sarah Moore Greene Elementary School, February 21, 2002.

⁷⁸ Telephone interview with Roger Underwood, Accounts Payable Supervisor, Knox County Schools, May 14, 2002.

The Knox County Schools on notice have medium to high student mobility rates.

The system's Office of Research and Evaluation assesses and ranks schools based on school context variables, including student mobility. The resulting School Context Assessment Report calculates student turnover by dividing a school's average daily membership in May into the number of students who withdrew during the school year.⁷⁹ The 2000-01 Report indicates medium to high student mobility rates for schools on notice in Knox County. The following table contains mobility rates for each school on notice and the system's elementary schools with the highest and lowest mobility rates for elementary schools.

SCHOOL	MOBILITY RATE
Pond Gap Elementary (system high)	53%
Maynard Elementary	43%
Lonsdale Elementary	40%
Sarah Moore Greene Elementary	29%
Halls Elementary (system low)	10%

(Source: School Context Assessment 2000-01 Report, Knox County Schools Office of Research and Evaluation)

School officials noted student mobility as a major area of concern. One principal stated that high student mobility rates affect the consistency of teacher records; another noted its effect on test scores. Research shows that heightened student mobility is associated with achievement and poverty. Schools on notice in Knox County have high numbers of students receiving free and reduced lunch, and highly mobile students are generally poorer than their non-mobile counterparts.⁸⁰ High mobility is shown to lower achievement for individual students and may also lower school- and district-wide performance.⁸¹

Student mobility is an issue for urban school systems across the country, with some choosing to study the effects of this phenomenon. In Minneapolis, a group of planners and researchers from education and community organizations conducted two studies and a research review to understand better the effects of mobility on elementary student achievement. The resulting *Kids Mobility Project Report* includes recommendations for schools and other community agencies in an effort to reduce and lessen the negative effects of family and student mobility.⁸²

⁷⁹ "School Context Assessment, 2000-2001 Report," Office of Research and Evaluation, Knox County Schools.

⁸⁰ General Accounting Office, "Elementary School Children: Many Change Schools Frequently, Harming Their Education," HEHS-94-45, GAO, February 4, 1994, <http://www.gao.gov> (accessed March 12, 2002).

⁸¹ David Kerbow, "Patterns of Urban Student Mobility and Local School Reform," Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk, October 1996, <http://www.csos.jhu.edu/crespar/Reports/report05entire.html> (accessed March 14, 2002).

⁸² "Kids Mobility Project Report," Family Housing Fund, <http://www.fhfund.org/Research/kids.htm> (accessed May 20, 2002).

★ **Schools on notice in Knox County experience high rates of teacher turnover.**

Principals and system staff indicate staff turnover rates are traditionally high at the on-notice schools. The following chart represents staff retention at each school on notice over three school years. Columns headed with school years contain the number of educators (minus principal) in each school that year. Columns marked “SAME” include the percentage of educators (minus principal) remaining at the school between school years.

Teacher Retention Rates for Schools On Notice in Knox County

	<i>1998-99</i>		<i>1999-2000</i>		<i>2000-01</i>
Lonsdale Elementary	28	64.3%	28	85.7%	31
Maynard Elementary	17	64.7%	25	100%	26
Sarah Moore Greene	50	68%	71	81.7%	73

(Source: Jill Carroll, Human Resources Supervisor, Knox County Schools, E-mail, Apr. 23, 2002.)

Retention rates have improved at each school, but turnover is higher than the six percent overall turnover rate for the state’s teaching force.⁸³ By retaining all staff between school years 1999-2000 and 2000-01, Maynard Elementary had the highest retention rate; however, the school will likely undergo drastic change in the coming year. All staff at Maynard must reapply for their positions or move to another school in the system as the school becomes a national demonstration site for Project GRAD in 2002-03.⁸⁴

Teacher turnover is linked to many factors. One report finds that, excluding retirement, most teachers voluntarily change jobs or leave the profession for personal reasons, job dissatisfaction, and to pursue other jobs.⁸⁵ In Knox County, school and system officials note the perception that entering teachers “get their foot in the door” of the system by beginning their careers at a low performing school with potentially adverse working conditions. Officials also note difficulty retaining teachers in the midst of surrounding systems that offer higher teacher salaries, represented in the following graph. Knox County’s average teacher salary of \$37,547, though above the state average, is below the regional average pay of \$38,584.⁸⁶

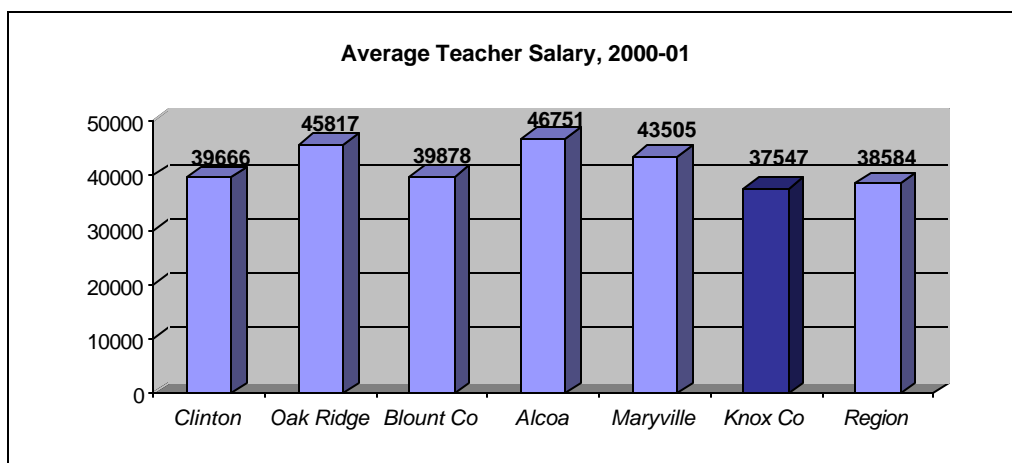
⁸³ Tennessee State Board of Education, Key Result Area 5: Teacher Education and Professional Growth, *Master Plan 2002*, p. 9.

⁸⁴ Telephone interview with Bobbi McGarity, Assistant Superintendent for Supplementary Services, Knox County Schools, April 23, 2002.

⁸⁵ Richard M. Ingersoll, *Teacher Turnover, Teacher Shortages, and the Organization of Schools*, University of Washington Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, 2001, p. 3.

<http://depts.washington.edu/ctpmail/PDFs/Turnover-Ing-01-2001.pdf> (accessed: March 14, 2002).

⁸⁶ Regional average includes teacher salary for systems included in the Knoxville Metropolitan Statistical Area: Anderson County, Clinton City, Oak Ridge City, Blount County, Alcoa City, Maryville City, Grainger County, Jefferson County, Knox County, Sevier County, and Union County; Tennessee Department of Education, “Statewide Report Card 2001,” <http://www.k-12.state.tn.us/rptcrd01/state1.htm> (accessed February 15, 2002).



(Source: System Report Cards 2001)

Current research highlights the increased fiscal burden of districts and schools with high teacher turnover rates.⁸⁷ High turnover also contributes to discontinuity in the educational system and has been linked to lowered student performance on standardized tests.⁸⁸ Increased teacher experience positively affects student achievement and is undermined by high turnover.⁸⁹ Teachers who leave remove their growing levels of experience from classrooms; less experienced teachers often fill the open slots.

Despite implementation of Personal Accountability Classes and other policies and procedures to maintain orderly schools, Knox County schools on notice have high student suspension rates. Though limited, educational research supports the common assumption that disorder (i.e., high rates of student delinquent behavior) negatively affects student achievement.⁹⁰ Suspension rates at two schools on notice exceed state and system averages. According to the School Context Assessment, all schools on notice rank in the bottom half of elementary schools for student aberrant behavior, meaning the schools have higher student suspension rates than half their peers.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Texas Center for Educational Research, *The Cost of Teacher Turnover*, November 2000, p. 1, <http://www.sbec.state.tx.us/txbess/turnoverrpt.pdf> (accessed: March 14, 2002).

⁸⁸ David W. Grissmer, Ann Flanagan, Jennifer Kawata, and Stephanie Williamson, *Improving Student Achievement: What State NAEP Scores Tell Us*, RAND Corporation, 2000, <http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR924/> (accessed: March 14, 2002).

⁸⁹ Daniel P. Mayer, John E. Mullens, and Mary T. Moore, *Monitoring School Quality: An Indicators Report*, NCES 2001-030, U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics, December 2000, p. 13.

⁹⁰ Paul E. Barton, Richard J. Coley, and Harold Wenglinsky, "Order in the Classroom: Violence, Discipline, and Student Achievement," ETS Policy Information Center, October 1998, <ftp://ftp.ets.org/pub/res/order.pdf> (accessed April 15, 2002).

⁹¹ The School Context Assessment ranks schools based on negative school factors, called extenuators. The assessment defines aberrant behavior as "percent of students who were suspended at least once during the school year." In the table, RANK is the number assigned to a group of elementary schools for aberrant behavior as compared to other elementary schools in the system (1=least aberrant behavior; 5=most aberrant behavior).

	SUSPENSION RATE	RANK
State of Tennessee	10.6%	n/a
Knox County Schools	10.4%	n/a
Lonsdale Elementary	16.1%	4/5
Maynard Elementary	18%	5/5
Sarah Moore Greene Elementary	4.6%	3/5

(Source: School Report Cards 2001, System Report Cards 2001, Statewide Report Card, 2001; Rate determined by dividing absolute number of suspensions by ADM; See footnote 68 for RANK).

Knox County schools on notice are housed in old buildings, and two received low ratings on a facility survey; however, each appears to be well-maintained. In 2002, the Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations performed a survey to assess the condition of existing school facilities.⁹² The survey also indicates the number of additional classrooms each facility needs to comply with Education Improvement Act (EIA) class size mandates. The system's project and facilities manager completed the surveys for schools in Knox County.

Lonsdale was built in 1935 with an addition to the building in 1955. TACIR's survey indicates that Lonsdale Elementary is in "fair" condition, meaning "the building's structural integrity is sound, but the maintenance or repairs required to insure [sic] that it meets building code or functional requirements hinder – but do not disrupt – the facility's use." According to the survey, Lonsdale needs one additional classroom to comply with the EIA standards. The school achieved compliance in 2001-02; the survey reported the school intended to use a portable building to do so.⁹³

Maynard Elementary's main facility was completed in 1926, with an addition in 1956. The school received a "poor" score, indicating that "repairs required to keep the structural integrity sound or to insure [sic] that it meets building code or functional requirements are costly and disrupt – or in the case of an individual component may prevent – the facility's use." The TACIR survey indicated that the facility has enough classrooms to accommodate EIA class size requirements.⁹⁴

Finally, Sarah Moore Greene Elementary School opened in 1973 and was renovated and became a Magnet Technology Academy in 1996. The school received a score of "good" on the TACIR survey, indicating that "the structural integrity is sound and the facility can meet building code and functional requirements with only routine or preventive maintenance or minor repairs that do not hinder its use." As of July 1, 2001, Sarah Moore Greene needed two additional classrooms to accommodate the EIA class size mandates. The survey indicated that the school would rely on portable classrooms to meet the

⁹² Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, Existing School Facility Survey Form and Verification Data, 2002.

⁹³ Ibid, Lonsdale Elementary School.

⁹⁴ Ibid, Maynard Elementary School.

requirements.⁹⁵ Sarah Moore Greene Elementary met all class size requirements in 2001-02.

Despite the fact that the buildings are older and that two scored low on the TACIR survey, each of the buildings appears to be well-maintained. All principals of schools on notice further indicated that the schools have adequate custodial staff and the system provides adequate maintenance staff.

Schools on notice in Knox County lack consistency in school programming and offerings. Connectivity and consistency in program development and implementation is a recognized curriculum and programming standard.⁹⁶ Consistency is especially relevant for schools on notice in Knox County, which experience high student mobility rates. Though schools on notice in Knox County use system curriculum guides and offer *some* similar programs, central office and school staff note that programming varies widely among schools. Further, schools have a wide range of available programming from which to choose. Specifically, system and school officials mentioned several different reading programs for students in regular education, Title I schools, and special education. The lack of coordinated reading curricula across grades can contribute to low student achievement,⁹⁷ and system officials note that students with reading difficulties often have poor self-esteem. Frustration with various programs could exacerbate these students' problems.

⁹⁵ Ibid, Sarah Moore Greene Elementary School.

⁹⁶ "Training Opportunities," PDK International Curriculum Management Audit Center, <http://www.pdkintl.org/profdev/icmac/training.htm> (accessed April 25, 2002).

⁹⁷ Implementing Schoolwide Programs – An Idea Book on Planning, "Section III Planning Schoolwide Program Change, Step 3: Clarifying Needs and Finding Research-based Strategies," U.S. Department of Education, October 1998, http://www.ed.gov/pubs/Idea_Planning/section_3.html (accessed May 15, 2002).

Recommendations

Note that any conclusions in the previous section that are preceded by this symbol ★ have a related recommendation in the state-level report.

Knox County should continue to use the district level planning document. Further, the district should continue to make all schools aware of the district improvement plan and evaluate individual schools' progress concerning goals. To ensure school-level implementation of the district improvement plan, Knox County follows up with schools on a regular basis and reviews the individual schools' strategies for improvements. Additionally, each school is required to incorporate the system-level plan into its SIP.

System and school leaders should continue their focus on school improvements. Further, the Knox County schools on notice should continue to use school improvement plans. The SACS Commission on Elementary and Middle Schools reported that a School Improvement Team should provide guidance for the implementation of the SIP by encouraging the school's entire staff to participate.⁹⁸ Each Knox County school on notice has a team comprised of stakeholders. Further, the Commission suggested that successful implementation must include preparation, effective monitoring, communication, and reporting.⁹⁹

Knox County school system should continue to fund Personal Accountability Classes but should evaluate the results. System officials note PAC has only existed for two years, and budget constraints limit the two schools with the worst suspension rates – Lonsdale and Maynard – to having PAC classes two days per week. However, the system should determine if and how these classes can reduce elementary suspensions by providing students with academic assistance and social development.

Knox County Schools should evaluate the results of Project GRAD. By documenting the effects the program's components have on school improvement, the system can design and promote similar strategies in non-participating schools.

★ **The system should continue to require schools to develop and maintain building-level technology plans. Further, both the system and individual schools should continue to apply for technology grants and should keep student availability of technological resources high.**

The Knox County School Board and County Commission should collaborate to ensure school improvement. The Knox County executive recommended the largest increase in funding in three years for education for the 2002-03 school year, which may improve past tensions between the board and commission related to funding.¹⁰⁰ Both

⁹⁸ The Commission on Elementary and Middle Schools, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, "The Quality School Improvement Process for Elementary and Middle Schools," 1999.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Michael Silence, "\$8 Million School Increase Proposed," *KnoxNews Sentinel Online*, May 24, 2002, <http://www.knoxnews.com> (accessed May 24, 2002).

entities should work to improve the working relationship and may wish to consult a neutral, third-party mediator to identify potential hindrances to effective communication and planning. The commission and board might further consider planning targeted work sessions in the areas of enhanced communication and education improvement.

★ **Knox County system and school officials should consider working towards SACS accreditation for the remaining unaccredited schools in the system.** The schools are already compiling and submitting information to meet state policy requirements. Though the state has not evaluated the benefits of SACS accreditation, it does ensure schools meet a minimum number of standards. System officials stated that unaccredited schools will begin the accreditation process in spring 2002.¹⁰¹

Knox County Schools should continue to use alternate methods of verifying special education student counts until problems with state-provided software are resolved.

According to a system official, the school system “has communicated its concerns about the software program to the Tennessee Department of Education and the vendor on several instances.”¹⁰² The system now manually compares census and membership figures every 20 days for accuracy, and the Special Education Department performs a manual headcount of special education students twice a year.¹⁰³

★ **Knox County Schools should strengthen and evaluate existing policies and practices to increase teacher retention and should explore incentive packages for teachers willing to work and stay in inner city schools.** The system currently implements various system-wide strategies to increase retention rates, including new teacher orientation, peer mentoring, and teacher celebration programs.¹⁰⁴ One on-notice school principal also mentioned hiring student interns as a tool to increase retention. Because of high teacher turnover in some schools, the system may wish to consider implementing a formal system-wide mentoring program, including regular contact between parties involved. The system should also include formal contact between teachers and the central office.

Knox County Schools should also consider special initiatives to increase inner city teacher retention. The World Class School System template contains strategies for increasing system-wide teacher retention, including raising the employer contribution rate to health insurance and paying teachers for sick days at retirement. System officials also indicate that the negotiations team is discussing special incentives for inner city teachers with the Knox County Education Association.¹⁰⁵ Though it would require additional

¹⁰¹ Interview with Sarah Simpson, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Knox County Schools, January 8, 2002.

¹⁰² Ron McPherson, Supervisor of Accounting, Systems and Financial Control, Knox County Schools, “State of Tennessee Comptroller Draft Document,” E-mail to the author, August 8, 2002.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Knox County Schools 12 Month Agenda, *Teacher Recruitment and Retention*, PowerPoint presentation, pp. 9-10.

¹⁰⁵ Telephone interview with Sarah Simpson, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Knox County Schools, April 11, 2002.

funding, the system may wish to consider the following types of teacher incentives for inner city teachers:

- Reduced-rate graduate tuition or higher fee waivers for graduate classes; and/or
- Significant salary increases.

Knox County Schools should continue to implement its elementary curriculum and other strategies to curb the effects of high student mobility rates. Knox County teachers use elementary curriculum guides and attend some uniform training required by the system. These strategies and the implementation of Project GRAD in inner city schools may reduce the effects of high mobility rates experienced by schools on notice in Knox County. The Knox County school system should evaluate these and other efforts to lessen the effect of high student mobility. The system may also wish to study further the effects of student mobility and explore possible solutions by collaborating with other community agencies, particularly those concerned with employment, housing, and public welfare.

Knox County Schools should continue to implement, strengthen, and evaluate strategies to decrease student aberrant behavior at schools on notice. Knox County School officials note the system has “policies and procedures...to prohibit students from fighting and from causing disruption” in school.¹⁰⁶ Inner-city schools are adopting Project GRAD and began implementing the Consistency Management and Cooperative Discipline component in spring 2002. School staff attended training in this area, and principals of schools on notice have observed in-school disciplinary improvements since implementation. Each principal expresses belief that improvements will continue. Project GRAD will also supply schools with social workers. Maynard Elementary will implement all program components within one year as a national demonstration site for the project.

Further, each school on notice offers PAC classes to stem suspension rates, and each school has in-house disciplinary methods. Principals noted home visits and other programs, including special classes and staff, for students with behavior problems. In school year 2001-02, Lonsdale Elementary and Sarah Moore Green Elementary began offering Solutions classes, an alternative to suspension staffed with a certified teacher and educational assistant. Knox County Schools also employs its own security force and has School Resource Officers (SROs).

Knox County should monitor schools to ensure consistent enforcement of district policies and procedures and examine trends in suspension rates. Principals of on-notice schools also noted high numbers of “oppositional defiant disorder” students.¹⁰⁷ Knox County

¹⁰⁶ “How Does the System Ensure the Schools are Safe and Secure?,” Knox County Schools, handout received during district liaison interview, January 8, 2002.

¹⁰⁷ Internet Mental Health defines the disorder as a “pattern of negativistic, hostile, and defiant behavior lasting at least 6 months” characterized by various negative behaviors and causing “significant impairment in social, academic, or occupational functioning;” “Oppositional Defiant Disorder, American Description,” Internet Mental Health, <http://www.mentalhealth.com/dis1/p21-ch05.html> (accessed May 9, 2002).

Schools officials should analyze school-level disciplinary data to identify potential special needs and implement strategies to address them.

Knox County should ensure all buildings are in adequate condition and able to comply continually with EIA class size requirements. As indicated in the TACIR facility surveys, two schools on notice needed additional space to comply with EIA standards. Though all the system's schools met class size standards in 2001-02, Knox County should ensure schools' continual abilities to do so. Further, two schools on notice have low building condition scores. The system should consider these low scores and make decisions concerning the future of the structures.

Knox County should review existing programs and initiatives and create recommendations promoting greater consistency in school programming. System officials note the central office has discussed coordinating student academic programs. As part of Project GRAD, the system will implement a common reading curriculum over the next two school years (2002-03 and 2003-04) in each of the system's Title I schools (including all schools on notice). The system is also working to align special education instruction with the regular education curriculum, with teachers teaching the same essential objectives at all grade levels and in each content area.

By promoting strategic use of system resources, districts can "help schools coordinate and concentrate their resources on classroom instruction."¹⁰⁸ In doing so, Knox County would ensure schools maintain focus on improving student achievement and provide students with similar learning experiences.

¹⁰⁸ *Turning Around Low-Performing Schools: A Guide for State and Local Leaders*, "Executive Summary," U.S. Department of Education, May 1998, <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/turning/part3.html> (accessed May 8, 2002).

Appendix A

Persons Interviewed

Central Office Staff

Sarah Simpson, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction (District Liaison)
Sue Boyer, Elementary Supervisor (Sarah Moore Greene)
Zulette Melnick, Elementary Supervisor (Lonsdale)
Fran Thomforde, Elementary Supervisor (Maynard)
Bobbi McGarity, Assistant Superintendent for Supplementary Student Services
Marti Richardson, Supervisor of Teacher Center/Staff Development, Extended Learning Program
Mike Winstead, Coordinator of Research and Evaluation and Group Testing
Ron McPherson, Supervisor of Accounting Systems and Financial Control
Roger Underwood, Accounts Payable Supervisor
Pat Dickens, Technology Grant Assistant
Nancy Merritt, Coordinator, Personal Accountability Classes

School Personnel

Blenza Davis, Principal, Sarah Moore Greene Elementary School
Carolyn Lee, Principal, Maynard Elementary School
Melvenia Smith, Principal, Lonsdale Elementary School

Local Government

Mary Lou Horner, Chair, Education Committee, Knox County Commission

State Personnel

Dwain G. Burke, Regional Director, Tennessee Department of Education
Dr. Carol Myers, Regional Consultant, Tennessee Department of Education

Documents Reviewed

Audit Documents:

Knox County Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, Fiscal Year 2000-01
Knox County Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, Fiscal Year 1999-2000
Knox County School System Report Card, 2000-01
Review and Analysis of School System Data, Knox County (1997, 1999, 2000)
TACIR School Facility Survey, 2002
Lonsdale Elementary School
Maynard Elementary School
Sarah Moore Greene Elementary School
School Report Cards, 2000-01
Lonsdale Elementary School
Maynard Elementary School
Sarah Moore Greene Elementary School
School Improvement Plans
Lonsdale Elementary School
Maynard Elementary School
Sarah Moore Greene Elementary School
Knox County Schools Strategic Plan IV, Fall 2001
Knox County Schools World Class School System Template

Knox County District Budgets 2000-01 and 2001-02
Knox County School Board Policy
Zero Tolerance Documents
School Approval Database
Title I documents
Knox County School System Website
 Online school profiles
 School Website: Sarah Moore Greene Elementary School
Knox County Schools Management and Performance Review by McConnell, Jones,
 Lanier & Murphy, LLP
Principals' Performance Contracts and 12-Month Agendas
Knox County Schools Staff Development Planning Framework
Knox County Teacher Center and In-service documents
2000-01 Test Data document, Knox County Schools
Knox County Schools 2000-01 School Context Assessment
Knox County Schools Safe and Secure Schools Documents

Appendix B
Current Status of Schools On Notice
as reported by the Department of Education

(Note: This list includes Title I schools in School Improvement that were not on notice in 2001-02.)

Achieved good standing by showing two years of adequate progress
2000-01 and 2001-02

School system	Schools in good standing
Anderson County	Grand Oaks
Campbell County	West Lafollette
Cocke County	Grassy Fork Northwest
Cumberland County	Pine View
Fayette County	Central Elementary LaGrange Moscow
Humboldt City	East End Elementary Main Street Elementary
Henderson County	Scotts Hill School
Morgan County	Oakdale Petros Joyner
Harriman City	Central Intermediate
Memphis City	Cherokee Elementary Douglass Elementary Evans Elementary Pyramid Academy

Schools making adequate progress
2001-02

School system	Schools making adequate progress
Blount County	Eagleton Elementary
Campbell County	Stony Fork
Carter County	Range Elementary
Claiborne County	Powell Valley Elementary
Cleveland City	Arnold Elementary Blythe-Bower Elementary
Davidson County	Shwab Elementary West End Middle Pearl Cohn High School Whites Creek High School
Fayette County	Jefferson Elementary Southwest Elementary Fayette Ware High School Somerville Elementary

School system	Schools making adequate progress
Grainger County	Joppa Elementary Washburn Elementary
Grundy County	Tracy Elementary
Hamblen County	Lincoln Heights Elementary
Hamilton County	Calvin Donaldson Howard Elementary Howard School of Academics and Technology
Hawkins County	Clinch School
Kingsport City	Roosevelt Elementary
Knox County	Sarah M. Greene Elementary
Lawrence County	Ingram Sowell Elementary
Maury County	James Woody/Mt. Pleasant Elementary
Perry County	Perry County High School
Putnam County	Uffleman Elementary
Rutherford County	Holloway High School
Union County	Luttrell Elementary Maynardville Elementary
Wayne County	Frank Hughes
Memphis City	Berclair Elementary Bethel Grove Elementary Coleman Elementary Cummings Elementary Dunn Avenue Elementary Egypt Elementary Kingsbury Elementary Klondike Elementary Lauderdale Elementary Oakshire Elementary Raleigh-Bartlett Scenic Hills Brookmeade Elementary Corning Elementary Fairley Elementary Frayser Elementary Graceland Elementary Levi Elementary Lincoln Elementary Locke Elementary

School system	Schools making adequate progress
Memphis City (continued)	Orleans Elementary Raineshaven Elementary Raleigh Egypt Middle School Shannon Elementary Sharpe Elementary Sheffield Elementary Trezevant High School Whitney Elementary Melrose High School Northside High School Oakhaven High School Whitehaven High School

**Schools failing to make adequate improvement 2001-02
Recommended for probation 2002-03**

School System	Probation
Claiborne County	Clairfield Elementary
Davidson County	Kirkpatrick Elementary Warner Elementary Maplewood High School Stratford High School
Fayette County	Northwest Elementary
Hamilton County	Chattanooga Middle School Dalewood Middle School East Lake Elementary John P. Franklin Middle School Hardy Elementary Orchard Knob Elementary Orchard Knob Middle School Woodmore Elementary
Hardeman County	Grand Junction Elementary
Knox County	Maynard Elementary Lonsdale Elementary
Memphis City	Airways Middle School Carver High School Chickasaw Junior High Cypress Junior High Denver Elementary

School System	Probation
Memphis City (continued)	Dunbar Elementary Fairview Junior High Frayser High School Geeter Middle School Georgian Hills Elementary Georgian Hills Junior High Hamilton Middle School Hawkins Mill Elementary Hillcrest High School Hollywood Elementary Humes Middle School Lanier Junior High Larose Elementary Lester Elementary Longview Middle School Oakhaven High School Riverview Middle School Sheffield High School Sherwood Middle School Spring Hill Elementary Springdale Elementary Treadwell Elementary Treadwell High School Trezevant High School Vance Middle School Westhaven Elementary Westside High School Westwood Elementary Westwood High School Winchester Elementary Booker T. Washington High School East High School Fairley High School Hamilton High School Kingsbury High School Manassas High School Middle College High School Mitchell Road High School Raleigh Egypt High School South Side High School Wooddale High School

Appendix C

System Response

Each system was given an opportunity to review and respond to the report. A copy of the system's written response begins on the next page.

KNOX COUNTY SCHOOLS
ANDREW JOHNSON BUILDING

Dr. Charles Q. Lindsey, Superintendent



MEMORANDUM

TO: Ethel R. Detch
Director, Office of Education Accountability
State of Tennessee
Comptroller of the Treasury

FROM: Charles Lindsey, Superintendent *CL*
Knox County Schools
Charles Lindsey

DATE: October 15, 2002

RE: The Review and Analysis of the Knox County Schools by The Office of
Education Accountability.

We have reviewed the entire document again and have noted that our previously stated comments and recommendations were in the final copy. Consequently, the school system now concurs with the analysis and conclusions found within The Review and Analysis of the Knox County Schools by The Office of Education Accountability's document.

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◆ Sherrill Murrell

◆ indicates staff who assisted with this project